



State Representative

Mark Miloscia



The 2008 session so far

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2008 legislative session is underway! We got off to a fast start, which is good, because there is much to do and only 60 days to get it done in this year's short session.

The mood in the Legislature is optimistic. Our state budget is in good shape and there is a cooperative spirit that should help us to stay focused on solving problems and serving the public without wasting time bickering.

This newsletter can only cover a selection of issues we're considering this session. I'll tell you about other issues in my end-of-session report in the spring. But if you'd like to hear about an issue not covered here, just let me know. I always welcome your questions, concerns or suggestions about the Legislature or new state laws. Hearing from you is a pleasure and helps me to be an effective voice for our community.

I'm honored to serve you. Let's keep in touch!

Sincerely,

Mark Miloscia

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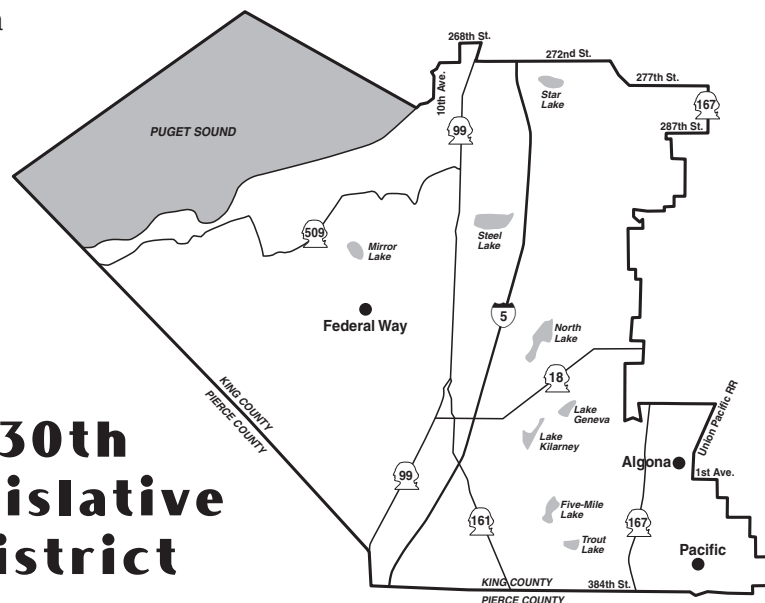
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**30th
Legislative
District**

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Stopping sex offenders: Learning from tragedy to make families safer



Everyone was outraged by the sickening murder of 12-year-old Zina Linnik by a sex offender in Tacoma last summer. I met with Zina's family. It was a heart-wrenching experience. But it was also inspiring to see how the family is working hard to improve our laws and spare other families from similar tragedies. We now have the report of the Special Sex Offender Task Force that was created to examine lessons from Zina's death. Enacting their recommendations needs to be a top 2008 priority.

Gov. Gregoire agrees. She has requested \$8.24 million to better protect the public against sex offenders. This funding would help us get a DNA record for every registered sex offender. It would also make other key improvements, such as: more in-person verification of sex offender locations; a unified sex offender registry to track offenders; more monitoring of released offenders—including electronic GPS monitoring of high-risk offenders; more services for victims; and an expansion of the highly effective Operation Crackdown, which nabs sex offenders who violate conditions of their release.

The sooner we put these recommendations into effect, the better. No family should ever have to suffer what Zina's family has suffered.



We need a better way to pay for schools

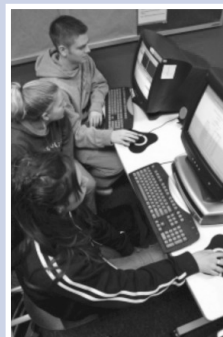
Federal Way schools won a huge court victory in November when a judge declared that Washington's system of funding schools is so unfair that it "violates the constitutional equal protection rights of Federal Way's teachers, students and taxpayers."

Our state Constitution is clear: education funding must be ample and fair. But despite big increases in school funding since 2004, our schools are still being hurt by an outdated patchwork of funding formulas that is neither ample nor fair. Some of this unfairness makes no sense at all. For example, Federal Way schools would have an additional \$6.5 million if it simply received the same per-student funding as the Everett School District!

I will be a loud voice for using part of the state's budget surplus *this year* to bring more resources and fairness to school funding. It will be a challenge. The early 2008 budget proposals fail to address these issues, and many lawmakers are content to delay further increases in school funding until 2009. But why wait? We already know that helping schools is the right thing to do for kids and our state, and as Martin Luther King, Jr. liked to say: "The time is always right to do what is right."

We hold students to high education standards in our state. Now it's time for the Legislature to hold itself to higher standards when it comes to paying for education.

Students learn 21st century skills in a computer class at Todd Beamer High School, Federal Way's newest high school (Photo courtesy of Federal Way Schools)



**Stable Housing helps kids
and families thrive** (Photo
credit: Office of Rural Housing)

Focus on housing

As the Chair of the House of Representatives' Committee on Housing, I'm very pleased that Gov. Gregoire and legislative leaders have agreed to make housing security for Washington families a top priority for 2008. The proposed housing agenda doesn't include everything I'd like to see, but it does take important steps to address critical housing issues facing Washington's families and communities.

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Responding to the mortgage crisis

Many other states are reeling from a mortgage crisis that is driving people from their homes and wrecking local economies. Our state, fortunately, is doing fairly well. Washington faces far fewer foreclosures and loan defaults than other states—we rank 48th in the nation for seriously delinquent loans. Even so, a state Task Force for Homeowner Security warns that further steps are needed to protect families and our economy from the national mortgage crisis.

Based on the Task Force recommendations, we're moving quickly to launch education and counseling services for thousands of Washingtonians who may need new payment plans or other strategies to

protect their home and family finances. Other key reforms include: making mortgage fraud a



felony crime; banning unfair practices that “steer” consumers to bad loan choices; and promoting clear, single-page loan disclosure forms for borrowers. We should be able to pass all of these reforms this session.

Promoting affordable housing

Affordable housing is becoming a distant dream for more and more families, especially in King County where prices and rents have soared for years. Soaring housing costs have been especially hard on lower income families. Fortunately, Gov. Gregoire and legislative leaders are poised to build on two of our most successful strategies for promoting affordable housing.



One immediate goal is to secure a major funding boost for the Housing Trust Fund, which helps communities tailor local strategies to meet the housing needs of low-income families. We also hope to accelerate the ability of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission to help low and moderate income families purchase their first homes. These two proven programs give a great return on our housing investments. Expanding them will help thousands of families move into stable housing they will be proud to call home.

Partnerships for the homeless

The Washington Families Fund is a fantastic public-private partnership where state dollars leverage private sector dollars to help homeless families attain “service enriched” housing. Instead of simply providing a roof, the programs help families get needed job training or other services that directly address the *causes* of their homelessness. Gov. Gregoire is proposing to help 1,000 additional families through the Families Fund, and I expect her idea will gather strong support during the session.



I'm honored to be a voice for the 30th District in the Legislature.

Working for property-tax relief



In 2001, the people voted overwhelmingly for a 1% cap on property-tax increases (Initiative 747). Last fall, the state Supreme Court overturned the tax cap on the grounds that people didn't know what they were voting for!

I opposed that court decision and voted in the Legislature to reinstate the 1% cap. I'm happy to report we reinstated the people's will in a late November special session--**before** the court decision could impact property-taxes. We also passed another law to expand the property-tax deferral program to help more families.

These property-tax relief laws will help, but they won't tackle the issue of soaring property **assessments** that fuel higher taxes. The House Finance Committee is examining options for tackling the issue of rising assessments. If you have a personal story about how rising assessments are hurting your family, please share it with me. Your story may help me persuade other lawmakers that property-tax relief is still a top priority for citizens. The recent special session showed that more lawmakers are starting to "get it." So let's work together to keep the momentum building for long-term property-tax relief!

State Representative
Mark Miloscia
30th District

Keeping up with the Legislature

An easy way to track bills and votes is by visiting the state Legislature's official website, at: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/>

There, you'll find information on everything from legislative bills to state history and culture.

If you'd like to contact me personally, feel free to call our toll-free hotline at: **800.562.6000** (Hearing Impaired: **800.635.9993**)

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